

Nyctaginaceae, Molluginaceae, Cactaceae, Portulacaceae, Chenopodiaceae, Amaranthaceae and Caryophyllaceae. Polygonaceae, a family included in this order, is treated in a previous volume. The *Flowering Plants* volume does not include a key to the families at the beginning of the taxonomic treatment, but it would have been useful. Instead, readers are encouraged to use Mohlenbrock's companion book *Guide to the Vascular Flora of Illinois*. After a five-page introduction, the *Flowering Plants* volume delves into the Chenopodiales. Species descriptions are provided in an identical structure as the other volumes. Moreover, the author provides other useful tidbits such as a key to sterile or immature specimens of genera in the Chenopodiaceae and a table that details the differences between *Chenopodium lanceolatum* and *C. album*. The illustrations in this volume are truly lovely and I found myself admiring them as I paged through the text. Never have I seen such weedy species presented in such a lovely fashion.

The information included in these three texts is an invaluable addition to the knowledge of the flora of North America. In particular, those interested in the Midwest United States should consider making this series a part of their library.—Amy Trauth Nare, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A. amy_trauth@yahoo.com*

JOHN A. PARROTTA. 2002. **Healing Plants of Peninsular India**. (ISBN 0-85199-501-2, hbk.). CABI Publishing, 10 East 40th Street, Suite 3203, New York, NY 10016, U.S.A. (Orders: 212-481-7018, 212-686-7993 fax, cabi-nao@cabi.org). \$140.00, 944 pp, numerous color photos, 7" × 9 1/2".

Healing Plants of Peninsula India is an important addition to the therapeutic plant knowledge base. This work compiles valuable information on 545 species of therapeutic plants used in traditional Indian medicine. This is NOT a flora or identification guide, as there are no keys to species. There are, however, superb descriptions and color photographs for all species. "Species are organized alphabetically, by family, genus, and species", and all species are listed, under the appropriate family, in the table of contents.

The introductory material consists of a general introduction that addresses ecological and conservation issues, and the importance of this book in introducing readers to the medicinally useful floristic wealth of central and southern India. It is the author's hope that "...this work will contribute to the recognition and appreciation of the knowledge of plants and their therapeutic uses accumulated and preserved over the centuries across India's varied cultural landscape, and encourage efforts to conserve the diversity of natural ecosystems that are India's traditional pharmacy." There is a short section on the cultural and historical roots of traditional Indian medicine, highlighting Ayurvedic and Siddha medical concepts, and the importance of traditional medicine to the cultures of the region. There is an interesting section of only a few paragraphs called: *Botanical identification of traditional plant drug sources: current challenges*. This section describes a major problem facing Indian traditional medicine generated by a lack of precise botanical descriptions in the traditional texts and general lack of expertise in plant identification among the majority of traders, pharmacists, and Ayurvedic practitioners. A section on the *forest wealth of peninsular India* is the largest section of the introduction, and describes the region in detail, with specific information on vegetation zones. The species descriptions start soon after a brief section on *preparation and organization of the book*.

Each of the 545 species descriptions contains at least one color photograph. Descriptions are arranged as follows: The *scientific name* is followed by a listing of *synonyms* and *authorities*. *Common names* are listed in the appropriate languages of the region. Some common languages seen are: Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, and English. This feature makes this volume useful for Indian traditional healers and botanists alike, as the common names known by the locals can be used

to help find a good botanical description, with correct scientific nomenclature. *Botanical descriptions* are thorough, as is information on *distribution* and *habitat*. Of course the real importance of a work like this is best revealed under the subheading *medicinal properties and uses*. Here, one can find information on the part of the plant used in preparation of a traditional drug, historical information on which cultural groups used the plant, and the chemically active components, if they are identified. Each description also has a short list of *references*.

An extensive 186 pages of end matter follows the descriptions. A *Bibliography* is followed by a *Glossary of Medical Terms* and a *Glossary of Botanical Terms*. A very well done and complete *Common Name Index* comes next, separated into the languages of the region. Also included are a *Scientific Name Index* and an *Index of Medicinal Uses*.

This is certainly one of the most extensive and well-designed medicinal plant books to date. Hopefully its vast information and intuitive organization will set a standard for other regional medicinal plant books. This volume should help awaken readers to the vast unexplored areas of study in medicinal plants. Many of the species described in this work have not been studied scientifically, and could be of great pharmaceutical value. Finally, this book makes one fully aware of the importance of conserving all biologically diverse areas, especially those containing useful and potentially revolutionary healing plants.—*Cole Weatherby, Dept. of Biology, Austin College, Sherman, TX 75090, and Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX 76102, U.S.A., wweatherby@austinc.edu*

STEPHEN FOSTER and CHRISTOPHER HOBBS. 2002. **Peterson Field Guide to Western Medicinal Plants and Herbs.** (ISBN 0-395-83806-1, Flexi, ISBN 0-395-83807-X, hbk.). Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116-3764, U.S.A. (Orders: 617-351-3243, gracie_doyle@hmco.com, www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com). \$22.00 (Flexi), \$30.00 (hbk). 448 pp, 530 + color photos, 4 1/2" × 7 1/4".

This Peterson field guide to medicinal plants is the second by author Stephen Foster. The *Peterson Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs of Eastern and Central North America*, released in 2000, marked a sort of revolution in plant field guides. Not only did this guide allow for the identification of many plant species, using the "Peterson System", but it also provided important information on both contemporary and historical medicinal uses and toxicity. Having used field guides extensively, I have often found myself wanting more information than the descriptions had to offer. This usually meant a trip home to look the species up in my local flora and, often, another trip to the library to search for articles in the scientific literature. While I usually enjoy doing this kind of detective work, I found it fascinating to have more information available right there in the field, with the plant staring me in the face.

Initially this durably bound and covered book resembles any other field-worthy guide. I was a bit surprised to find thick glossy pages, each usually presenting at least one color photograph. This book places photographs immediately adjacent to the individual species descriptions, as other Peterson guides have done. This is a very nice feature, as it can often be frustrating flipping back and forth between descriptions and photographs. The identification system is decent. As in most Peterson botanical field guides, the species are separated into six flower color sections, followed by shrubs, trees, woody vines, ferns and fern allies, and grasses and grass-like plants. In the color-separated sections, things are also grouped by various key flower characteristics. This system requires one to thumb through practically every page until they find the section they are looking for. A table of contents at the beginning of each flower color section showing the sub-sections would be very useful, and speed